

Parts of notes
and letters
not dated
Caroline Weston
to different members
of the Weston family
from R. D. Webb

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Greenfield, Kilgobbin, Co. Dublin

My dear Friend

If any one had asked me yesterday morning (Monday) when I went into my office in town, who I should be best pleased to hear from I should have said "Caroline Weston". And then if I had been asked why, I should have said "Because I have a very great regard for her, & I used to hear from her - long ago - not so frequently. But of late - since she has been with the house of mine - since then was when she is in America - & the world having gone round, every one has specimens of his (her) own. I fear she took on me as a political heretic that cut my acquaintance which is extremely uncomfortable. Accordingly I was so much gratified by the receipt of your letter, that like a child with a cake, I nibbled a scrap at a time through the day - at long intervals - & only finished it when I was seated at home comfortably by the fire side this perishing cold weather.

I have known some very clever women in my time - & I think nearly every one of them was remarkable for extraordinary freedom & uncompromising tenacity of opinion - but prone to make allowances, & perhaps inclined to draw unreasonably large conclusions from insufficient premises. Now as you are in my estimate one of the class you must not be offended if I attribute to you some of these infirmities. I think you are not altogether fair when you pronounce judgment

upon tens of millions of your fellow creatures.

This whole work was is eminently calculated to mystify that prodigious majority of the British nation who have had little previous knowledge of or interest in American politics. American politics & the whole framework & constitution of the American political system are so intricate & complex - that I can hardly wonder that 99 out of 100 Englishmen are confused & bewildered when they attempt to form or pronounce an opinion.

It cannot be too often repeated in that by far the most influential & numerous class of teachers on these subjects, have been our American writers - of whom an extremely small proportion have been abolitionists or favorable to abolitionism. You know better than I do that our gentlemen at ease, our unwarmed men, merchants, divines, planters, &c. &c. 99 out of 100 Americans in England have defended or excused by slavery than represented abolitionists as foolish, unreasonable, interfering fanatics. And they have been generally believed. The English people take an absurd pride in their practical turn of mind - they are proud by theory - their disposition to hold their peace by precept - their dislike of violent revolution or any revolution. Then again the U. S. drew their existence as a nation to a successful termination - which they have been doing, lauding & celebrating - it was successful rebellion against England, which Englishmen have often been invited to commemorate in London - and besides the American people have almost invariably shown a hearty sympathy with the other

rebellion against England and other constituted governments. I don't wonder that a great number of ill informed, misinformed, Englishmen, whose knowledge of American & American politics & chattel slavery was derived from American travellers - I don't in the least wonder that they should have a sort of small, translation pleasure in seeing that the U. S. had a rebellion on their own hands even though the rebels were slaveholders - more especially when the uprising of the north for the maintenance of the Union did not appear to be for the overthrow of slavery, when the Government unambiguously disclaimed such an object, when slaves were expected to return to rebel masters by northern officers, & when many northern newspapers used all their influence to denounce such a thing as abolition & were particularly dishonest & malignant in their underestimation of abolitionists.

I never doubted from the time of the attack on Fort Sumter that the death blow of slavery in the United States was struck at the same time - I think the consummation was merely a question of time - but when we consider that the number of tolerably well-informed anti-American affairs - Englishmen is very small, and that the number of Americans who had no notion that in fighting for the Union they were also contending for abolition was very great, we ought not to be angry or surprised the English who care nothing for the Union regarded both sides as nearly equally proslavery, & that the northern

award of conquest and the truth at independence. Many thought that the truth would be really opposed to slavery if the truth established a Union of their own - that the truth standing alone would be unable to maintain a system so opposed to the public opinion of the rest of the civilized world. I have no doubt that many Englishmen who were tired of the quarrelsome ~~two~~ ^{denies} of American statesmen the disposition to pick quarrels with England which are so apt to fill the columns of American newspapers, really thought that if the truth & South were separate empires they would have so much to do in settling their own differences that they would have less time for quarrels with England as many who thought so, really believed that as to hostility to slavery there was not much to choose between the two sections, I am not much surprised that they should have looked without regard on the probabilities of the success of the attempt at secession.

You will understand that I am not at all expressing my own opinion but merely my notions of the probable notions of others - and in this way I account for the existence of views which you look on with great disgust & disapprobation, but which under the circumstances would be both natural & reasonable.

The whole subject always has been here-
topic & State is filled with difficulty in
my mind. Until lately I thought

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the North would hardly succeed in conquering the
South until after a long and desperate struggle. I still
doubt whether the Congress when made up of both
the trouble which the feelings of the people, either
through ignorance or self interest - either as masters
whites or slaveholders, are filled with such bitter
hostility to their Congress. As far as I know there is
no such hatred between any two European nations
as that which prevails to the South of the North
towards the North - for the extracts in the abolition
papers enable us to think that many Southern
editors of Democratic papers with many Democratic poli-
ticians and wise people detect the abolitionists but
more than they do the secessionists, and would gladly
have the States ante bellum with every guarantee for
slavery if they could turn back what has been done.
I never could see any way to the existence of two Republics
in the room of the United States - for the possession of the Mis-
sissippi & the Gulf of Mexico will create immense difficul-
ties - not to speak of the improbability of enforcing any
treaty engagements in connection with the recovery
of fugitive slaves. It is not fair to call people on
the side of the Atlantic proslavery because they
have felt and expressed themselves puzzled by such
difficulties as these which have created great
differences of opinion among the friends of the abo-
litionists. I have had letters from many of them
and the variety of sentiment is most remarkable &
such as should teach us all a lesson of charity.
When they differ, who know so much & feel so much
- surely people here who know so little & care so
little, may be allowed to have a great variety of views on
matters so complex. Some of our American friends
express great unity with the opinions expressed by me
in my Standard and letters while others differ very widely.

The first American abolitionist I caught as a guest was Wm Darrow of Oberlin who begged £1000 in England for the cause there. He was with us nearly two weeks and was hospitably received by our circle who were all teetotallers, though by no means equal in the possession of our houses or the length of our ~~fine~~ purses. When he was leaving he expatiated reland that temperance was so prevalent since he been in so many & such different houses & persons as the people teetotallers. I told him that more probably the only social circle in Dublin where he could have had the same experience. Now I think you are as better enabled to judge than Wm Darrow - by the first plan you divide the English into the believers of a reform minded Westons - Secondly, your interview is with a rather elevated stratum of society who don't mix with the middle class & know nothing of them - with a class in which Tory, exclusion, conservative notions are prevalent & who really has habits of republicanism.

Then again I think you sometimes feel that newspaper articles are written by individuals & that those writers when they aim to represent a class always exaggerate the views of the class they speak for. As in religious journals, the Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian editors is always more Baptist, Methodist, or Episcopalian than the sect themselves. I have not a word to say for the Times, the Saturday Review, the Morning Herald, or Blackwood. I have long looked upon newspapers with very small respect & I am continually disgusted with the atrocious disregard of truth which they evince in speaking of American affairs - their conduct leaving to the slaveholders. What I claim is that a nation of 20 millions shall not be condemned by whole-sale on account of the prejudices of a clique or the dishonesty of editors.

I hardly ever get a Standard which does not
contain statements of the grossest ~~acts~~ acts of treachery
speculation, the entire indifference to their country's
reputation & prosperity on the part of northern men
which it would be shamefully unjust to adduce as samples
of the conduct of the American people. I have seen
it well stated by the Spectator English correspondent
writing from New York that the English people are
blamed rather for what they have not done than
for what they have done and that the French who have
shown a less favorable feeling to the north than the
English are flattered while the latter get only abuse.

I wonder if the American & the English spoke different
languages they would get on more peacefully. Here in
England 12 millions of Protestants live among 12 millions
of Catholics who stick to the Pope with the intensest ultra-
montane fervor, who are the slaves of the priests, who
abhor Garibaldi & the unity of Italy, and would gladly
see the Austrian's heel on the neck of the poor people.
Under such circumstances thoughtful people are
obliged to admit that these neighbors may be igno-
rant & deluded & yet very good people in the main.

So I maintain that there is a great deal in the
past & present conduct of the United States & the
declarations & professions of northern clergy, states-
men, editors, & authors, to justify the difficulty
Englishmen have in making up their minds. That
this was not done in Antislavery was I always
thought - that it was meant by the great men of the
north to be any thing but a war for the Union I
do not think. But now in 1850 Englishmen
know more of the American constitution or in
the least comprehend the ~~and~~ devotion to the
Union which so long made them willing to submit
to the declaration of Slavery & the disgrace of their
compromises in order to maintain it.

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was about Harriet Martineau. This is a tender subject. Knowing how heartily I am drawn to her, it takes some courage for me to approach it. A very dear friend of her own - not your sister Maria, who is I believe her dearest friend - told me the thoughts her isolated life, living heavily alone with little or no opportunity, owing to her delicacy & her deafness, was as unfavorable to her way of viewing things - & that this was the cause of the "arrangement" of her American letters. I greatly regret this. I also regret that Mr Phillips' attacks upon England (which were I think unjust & unwarranted) have made her unjustifiably ^{unfair} ~~biased~~ to him. I admit her faults - I think she has her full share of them - as most of us have - but still I maintain that for many years past and at the present time there is nobody in Europe who has done so much to promote anti-slavery views and to uphold the humane cause in England. No, no George Thompson, General Thompson, Miss Burdett & Richard Cobden rolled into one. Her articles in the Daily News, her editions of American books, her are full of wonderfully able writing - all in favor of the efforts & principles of the abolitionists & anti-slavery Americans. And the trouble she has got from the Harriet has not in the least affected her. I believe her principles are quite impervious to personal feelings. I think it a great feather in her cap that Mrs Chapman loves & respects her so highly, for I regard Mrs Chapman as the largest minded mortal of whom I have any knowledge.

I have been diverted & saddened by observing the possibility with which reputations are lost & won under present circumstances in the United States. To think

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of Harriet Martineau being cast out, and Mrs. Burd
elevated into a hero - who never said a good word
for the Anti-Slavery cause or for its advocates until
she was asked to oblige him to declare himself.
Many years ago he of the Anti-Slavery League placed
trust in Catherine Maria Davies in their board room, as
good staunch Free traders. But indeed after all in their
great struggles the feeling is true, as in that individual
man's reputation are of much importance - men are
swept away like water in the lumber - and the results
of their acts are all that remain. Many years ago
I remember hearing that a good man whom I knew, who
was greatly respected & is now hardly thought of by any,
said he had been endeavouring to all his life to promote
education. He did not know whether he had effected
any thing - and yet I who have long since died have can
tately that by him this fellow worker & great good has
been done & an extraordinary change for the better is
visible in the Irish people in Ireland. So it is now
with the Abolitionists - although in fifty years to come it
may be that the names of Garrison & Phillips & Parker
may be the only ones that will be remembered in connec
tion with their efforts.

Have you seen them in the American Arrow which
has already reached (it is said) a fourth edition. The
author is a newspaper cotton broker. The book is
entirely truthful, very ably & well written, & full of
plausible misleading misstatements. Professor Cairnes
of Glasgow College, a young man of great ability, is now
writing a book on the other side which I think the
most complete ^{of the} I have ever seen of the barbarizing,
oppression, & retrograde influence of slavery on the
character of a country. I am printing the book &
have been of some use to the writer in supplying him
with facts & documents. I am sure you will like it

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Only think. It is now nearly 14 years
since I first saw you in Liverpool - you have
been under my roof. How delighted
I would be to see you there. In 8 hours from
London you would be at Holyhead & in 4 hours
more on Irish ground. I am not an hour from
the place where you would land. It would
be worth your while to see a bit of Ireland &
opposite to Greenfield Gate there is a row of
cabins as wretched looking as you would readily
find in Ireland, though I have been told that
there is far more in matters of taste than of
necessity. Our poor people are naturally bright - by
the side of the priests they are ignorant & superstitious
and by the peasants they are dreadfully dirty &
untidy. Still I greatly prefer them to the English
poor - they are more courteous, ~~more~~ more
virtuous. If I were to judge the English people by
their own newspapers I would pronounce them
among the most barbarous on earth. It is awful
how prevalent family quarrels, infanticide and
murders are among our extremely educated &
arrogant neighbours of the lower classes.

I feel that it is a bold thing to invite you to
our plain fare & plain accommodation. You
who have lived among the great ones of the earth
but I don't think your enjoyment ~~the~~ lies in
mere externals & I am sure you would find
my wife good company. My wife is a very
humble one - but there are many here who
would be glad to see Mrs Chapman enter

You will about the Mrs Putnam drama. I
have not yet read it not being fond of dramas
- but my wife has - she says it is sweet spi-
rited & has much beauty but is not at all
natural in conveying an idea of Plaudations
thoughts, embodied in happy words.

Yesterday I ~~got~~^{recd} from Mrs Chapman the
April Atlantic Monthly with some admirable
articles - one especially marked by her own
contribution - but none of which I have yet
had time to read. What an amazingly
laborious, energetic, indefatigable woman she
is. As far as one mortal can confer honors
on another, I hold myself honored by her friend-
ship & good opinions.

The last time I wrote to Mr. L'Angel I got
no answer. I was actually so near without
having heard of them. I only knew they had
another child by some mere accident, &
I don't even now know whether the junior
members of the family is a gentleman or
a lady. I wish you would tell me something
about them, as far as it is proper to tell in
a gossiping way to one who is their hearty
well wisher. Did Madame L'Angel ever get
Belle Italy - which I sent as a book I have
very rarely met with & I know she is rather
like myself a book fancier.

I cannot but say that I would be very
 good sitting down fight with you, you are
 one of the best talkers I ever knew, and
 a good talk is almost my highest
 idea of enjoyment. At any rate it
 is no bad way of passing time.

I don't like historical studies. They
 are as wise & they do no good. They are
 covered waters that get far & away
 very much more than another. See
 what the Italians have become. Look
 at Garibaldi that a grand old hero.
 He said "it is a few years since he was
 only an Italian". There are good
 people in England & I am not sure but
 you will come to regard us as better
 than the that dwell in Jerusalem.
 I am ever yours affectionately

Rich Webb